

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY PARIS NIACT IMMEDIATE

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FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 3672 ACTION SECSTATE INFO SITREP COLLECTIVE
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JERUSALEM AND TEL AVIV PASS ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PERP, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: BEIRUT SITREP - 2130 HRS JULY 2

REF: BEIRUT 3670 (DTG 021013Z JUL 78)

1. SUMMARY. FIGHTING RESUMED IN BEIRUT LATE AFTERNOON
JULY 2 BETWEEN SYRIAN ADF AND BOTH PHALANGE AND NATIONAL
LIBERAL PARTY MILITIAS. FIGHTING BEGAN IN DOWNTOWN PORT
AREA, NEAR PHALANGE PARTY HEADQUARTERS, SOON SPREAD TO
AIN AR REMANNEH AND BECAME GENERALIZED ABOUT 1800. NLP
HEADQUARTERS WAS HIT AND IS PRESENTLY BURNING. DANY
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CHAMOUN IS THREATENING TO CALL UPON THE ISRAELIS FOR
DIRECT ASSISTANCE. ACCORDING TO PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU
MEMBER KARIM PAKRADOUNI, CEASEFIRE WAS ARRANGED AT 2030
LOCAL. AS OF 2130, HOWEVER, INTENSIVE FIRING CONTINUES AND
SOME DIRECT GROUND FIGHTING HAS DEVELOPED IN CENTRAL
ASHRAFIEH. END SUMMARY.

2. FIGHTING RESUMES. APPROXIMATELY AT MIDDAY JULY 2, AFTER A QUIET MORNING, TWO INCIDENTS REPORTEDLY OCCURED, WHICH SPARKED RENEWED FIGHTING. 1) FOUR SYRIAN SOLDIERS WERE KIDNAPPED BY PHALANGIST ELEMENTS IN PORT AREA NEAR LEBANESE FRONT "UNIFIED MILITARY COMMAND" HEADQUARTERS. SYRIANS DEMANDED THEIR IMMEDIATE RETURN, BUT THEY WERE NOT RELEASED. 2) THERE WAS AN INCIDENT IN THE SAME GENERAL AREA BETWEEN PHALANGIST MILITIAS AND SYRIANS AT A ROADBLOCK. SYRIANS RETALIATED BY FIRING AT PHALANGIST POSITIONS IN BOURG - PORT AREA. PHALANGISTS BECAME CONVINCED THAT THEIR NATIONAL (POLITICAL) HEADQUARTERS WAS UNDER ATTACK, WHICH SYRIANS DENIED.

3. FIGHTING SPREADS. HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE BEGAN HITTING AIN AR REMANNEH AREA ABOUT 1700, OBSERVED FROM AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE AT YARZE. AS OF 1930 A SHELL OR ROCKET WAS HITTING AREA EVERY TWO SECONDS. BY 200, FIGHTING BY INDIRECT FIRE APPEARED TO BE GENERALIZED THROUGHOUT EAST BEIRUT.

4. NLP HEADQUARTERS ATTACKED. NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY (POLITICAL) HEADQUARTERS IN EASTERN ASHRAFIEH CAME UNDER HEAVY BOMBARDMENT FROM HIGH EXPLOSIVES AND ROCKETS AND CAUGHT FIRE AT ABOUT 2000 LOCAL. ACCORDING TO DANY CHAMOUN, HIS FATHER CAMILLE CHAMOUN IS IN THE BASEMENT OF AN ADJOINING BUILDING ALONG WITH SOME 40 PARTY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORKERS.

5. AMBASSADOR'S ACTIVITIES. DURING THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING, AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS, PRESIDENT SARKIS, DANY CHAMOUN AND PIERRE GAMAYEL. BOUTROS SAID AT ABOUT 2000 LOCAL THAT A CEASEFIRE HAD BEEN AGREED UPON BUT AS OF 2200 FIRING WAS STILL GOING ON. SARKIS DESCRIBED SITUATION AS "VERY BAD" AND IMPLIED THAT HE WAS IN TOUCH WITH SYRIANS. DANY CHAMOUN SAID HE DID NOT KNOW HOW FIGHTING HAD STARTED TOADY, WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES FOR A CEASEFIRE, AND SAID HE IS CONSIDERING ASKING FOR ISRAELI ASSISTNACE. DANY SAID, "WE HAVE LOST FIFTY PEOPLE ALREADY". PIERRE GEMAYEL (WHO WAS WITH SARKIS AT THE PALACE), AFTER REPEATING HIS USUAL LITANY ABOUT INTERNATIONAL CONSPIRACY, SAID HE HAD GIVEN CEASE-FIRE ORDER TO ALL PHALANGE UNITS.

6. CEASEFIRE? ACCORDING TO PAKRADOUNI, SPEAKING AT 2030, A CEASEFIRE HAD BEEN ARRANGED, TO TAKE EFFECT IMMEDIATELY. HE THOUGHT HOWEVER IT WOULD TAKE 30 TO 60 MINUTES TO COME INTO BEING. AT 2130 HE REPORTED THAT DIRECT FIGHTING HAD ERUPTED ON THE GROUND IN THE

SASSINE AREA (CENTRAL ASHRAFIEH). HE FELT THAT,
PARTICULARLY IF A POSITION ON THE GROUND HELD BY
EITHER SIDE, FELL TO THE OTHER, FIGHTING WOULD GET
OUT OF CONTROL REGARDLESS OF CEASEFIRE.
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